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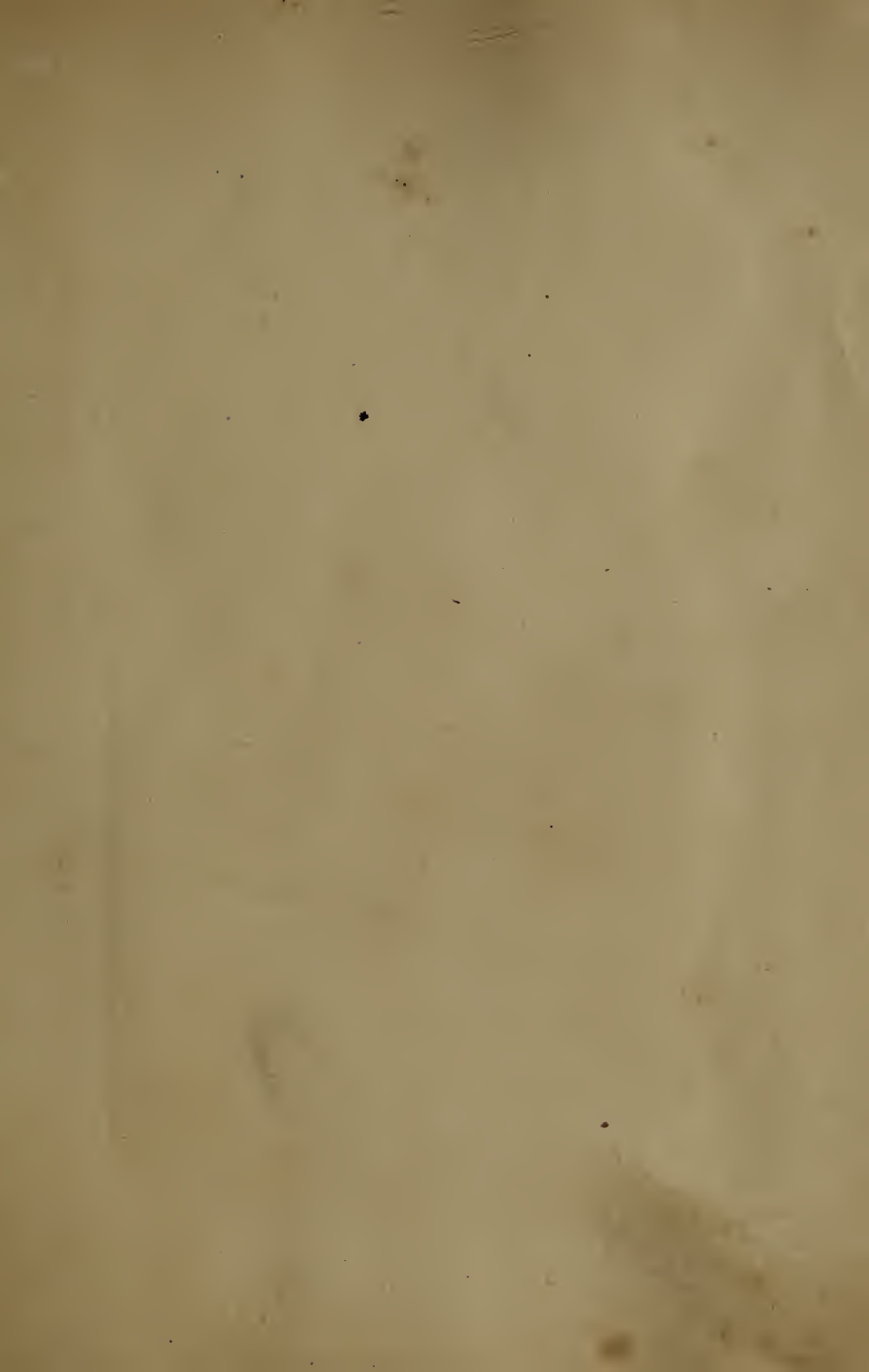
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Miss Sarah M. Blackwell
Christmas 1858.







FORDS OF THE JORDAN.—Page 14.

THE
RIVER JORDAN,

PICTORIAL AND DESCRIPTIVE.

“ We roam by Jordan's hallow'd tide,
And weep by ruins gray ;
For who would care his tears to hide
'Mid Judah's sad decay ?
Nay, let them flow, for Arab hordes
Now prowl where prophets pled ;
And Canaan droops where alien lords
'Deflower where'er they tread.”

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MDCCLVIII.

NOTE.

IN the following pages, with the help of the Views or Engravings to which they refer, an attempt is made to bring before the reader a glimpse at least of the River Jordan. Attention has been confined, not exclusively but mainly, to the stream itself, and the lakes which are found along its course; and of all the scenes on earth, none can possess so many attractions for a contemplative mind as these, consecrated as they are by ten thousand associations. From Mount Hermon and Cæsarea Philippi, or the adjacent Dan, to Jericho, the Dead Sea, Engedi, Zoar, and many other spots, the traveller is conducted here. With his Bible for his guide-book, and his faith increased and strengthened from hour to hour, he may leave such places a wiser man and a more steadfast believer.

THE
RIVER JORDAN,

PICTORIAL AND DESCRIPTIVE.

JEBEL-ESH-SHEIKH, the Mount Hermon of Scripture, is well known to tower over no small portion of the Holy Land. Its summit, often capped with snow, and its sides still more frequently streaked with it, are visible from a hundred places in Palestine, and give at once a grandeur and a calm serenity to the entire northern sections of the Land of Promise.

Not far from the base of that mountain, which is variously estimated at from 10,000 to 12,000 feet high, four rivers, all famous in antiquity, one of them famous for ever, take their rise. The Leontes rises between the Lebanon and Anti-lebanon ranges, and proceeding westward through some gorges of indescribable grandeur, finds its way to the Mediterranean a little to the north of Tyre. It is known at one place as the Litani—at another as the Kasmieh. Not far from the source of the Leontes is that of the Orontes, which, after running eastward for part of its course, bends westward again, and passing Antiöch, finds its way to the Mediterranean near Mount Casius. If the plans for a new route to India by the valley of the Euphrates be carried into effect, the Orontes will soon become more famous than it was even when the kings of Syria had elephants in thousands, and horses in myriads, trained for battle on its banks. The third river is the Barada, the Abana or else the Pharpar of Scripture, and which, watering a portion of the desert, turns it into an emerald, as it makes Damascus the most flourishing city of the East.

But it is to the fourth river, THE JORDAN, that our attention is to be here confined. Its source is among the slopes of Jebel-esh-Sheikh. After some controversy and many different opinions, there can now be no question that the highest, though perhaps not the most copious fountain of this river is at Hasbeyiah, a town on the south-eastern slopes of the mountain. It is seated far up on the crest of an eminence, and its castle and minaret are conspicuous from some dis-

tance. In the neighbourhood groves of the olive, the mulberry, the fig, and the apricot, give verdure and freshness to the scene. Oak-trees are also scattered along the sides of the hills, and the cultivation is described as being rich. The place is supposed by some to contain nine thousand inhabitants, of whom about two thousand are Greek Christians. Between fifty and a hundred are Protestants; for at the cost of much suffering and grinding oppression, at the hands alike of Mohammedan and of Greek, as well as of neglect or worse at the hands of British secretaries of state, some have been found to prefer the religion of the Bible to that of the priest, be he Romanist or Greek. Indeed few spots could be selected better fitted than Hasbeyiah to manifest, by their history, the hatred which men bear to the simple truth of God, and the persecution which those who adhere to it must be prepared to undergo, were it our present design to follow up that subject.

But leaving the village of Hasbeyiah for the source of the Jordan, and turning to the north, the traveller passes through groves of the trees already named, and crosses the river by a bridge of one arch, where the banks are luxuriantly fertile. Deflecting there a little to the east, he soon reaches the source. The river gushes "copious, translucent, and cool," from beneath a bold perpendicular rock. The scarp of that rock is about forty feet high, and the stream for a little branches into two. One to the north-east extends only to a few hundred yards, but its banks are fringed with the wild rose, with oleanders, and the Oriental virgin's bower. About a hundred yards from its source, the other branch—the true infant Jordan—plunges over a dam, and hastens onwards to the bridge which the traveller has just crossed. We may perhaps make some deduction from the accounts of this scene given by travellers; but one of them has said, and not a few have repeated, that "the gigantic rock, all majesty, above; the banks, enamelled with beauty and fragrance, all loveliness, beneath; render it a fitting fountain-head for the stream which was destined to lave the immaculate body of the Redeemer of the world." The terraces upon the hillsides, and the productiveness or the promise of the whole scene, render it one of singular beauty.

As the traveller descends the valley, it gradually widens. Fields of dhoura, beans, and other products, line the stream, which is at other places fringed by groves of olives and some poplars. In this upper region, the symptoms of civilization and the culture of the soil impress a stranger more favourably than farther down the Jordan. He will here meet with some frank Oriental salutation instead of the assault of a marauder, and as he traces the expanding river downwards amid sycamores and oleanders, he will find that somewhat in proportion to its increase is the decrease of that kindness which should link man to man.

But it is well known that other places claim the honour of giving rise to the Jordan, and concede with reluctance the claims of Hasbeyiah. One of these is Phiala, a little lake in this region, so called from its roundness and resemblance to a cup. Its claim is founded on a tradition recorded by Josephus, that a Jewish tetrarch threw chaff into that lake, which afterwards appeared at Paneas,

thee from the Land of the

I will remember.

Jordan Psalm XLVI.



THE JORDAN AT
PANEAS.



the place to be next referred to, having reached it by a subterraneous passage. But dismissing the legend, we mention the claims of Paneas, as more deserving of notice. This is unquestionably the Cæsarea Philippi of Scripture, and here there stood in former times a temple dedicated to the heathen god Pan, whence the modern name Baniyas has descended through the Paneas of the Greeks and Romans. That temple is erected over a cave, and bears niches, it is believed, for a statue of the god and some attendant divinities or nymphs. At certain seasons the cave is dry, but at others it pours forth a copious stream, and that was long reputed the fountain of the Jordan. The claim is not to be altogether rejected. It is undoubtedly a feeder of the river, but as Hasbeyiah is undoubtedly the highest and most remote, its primary claim is not to be set aside.

Paneas, the "Syrian Tivoli," lies at the base of Mount Hermon, and, as the Cæsarea Philippi of Scripture, it may claim more than a passing notice. It was much beautified and enlarged by Philip the Tetrarch, who called the place Cæsarea after his friend and patron Tiberius, and Philippi after himself, as well as to distinguish it from Cæsarea on the sea coast. These names subsequently gave place to that of Neronias, in honour of Nero. Here also did Titus, after the destruction of Jerusalem, cause many of his prisoners to fight as gladiators, so that numbers of the Jews fell by Jewish hands. A splendid temple was erected here by Herod in honour of Augustus, and in the vicinity many remains both of Roman and Saracenic structures are found. Among these the chief is the Castle of Paneas—the Heidelberg of the East—apparently the work both of Romans and of Saracens, which crowns the summit of the adjoining height, and exhibits wonders of beauty both near and distant such as are seldom witnessed. The walls were ten feet thick. At a short distance to the south another castle is found; but the place has now become a paltry and an insignificant village, poor and oppressed, though suggestive still, by its remains, of its fame, at once under the Romans, the Saracens, and during the time of the Crusades.

We should not leave Paneas without recalling to mind that hither the Saviour and his disciples retired (Mark viii.), and here he taught some of his profoundest but least acceptable doctrines. It is even supposed by some that Jebel-esh-Sheikh, which towers high above this place, was the real Mount of Transfiguration; but without entering at large into such discussions, it must suffice to have associated this place in passing with Him whose name is ever "as ointment poured forth"—fragrant to all who love him. In such places as Paneas, poor, lonely, and deserted as it is, we may feel a little nearer to the Holy One, if grace be our guide—

"And drink from all the living rills
That gush on holy ground."

But besides Hasbeyiah, Phiala, and Paneas, there is a fourth claimant for the honour of giving rise to the Jordan, which is found at Tel-el-Kadi, "The Hill of the Judge." It lies about three miles to the west of Paneas, and the country around is beautified by clumps of oak-trees, while the grass is gemmed with flowers. Tel-el-Kadi is now generally believed to occupy the site of Laish, which

the Danites took in a memorable raid (Judges xviii.) The Tel is an oblong hill rising to the height of perhaps eighty feet, and bears traces of being volcanic. In a hollow on the summit—an extinct crater—the fountain bubbles up, and on the west side several streams gush out so copiously as at once to form a river of clear, sweet, cool water, twelve or fifteen yards broad. This was long reckoned not merely the source of the river itself, but also of its name, which is fancifully supposed to mean “The River of Dan.” It was here that Abraham stayed his pursuit of the discomfited kings (Gen. xiv. 14); and from this place at one extremity of the promised land, to Beersheba at the other, became a proverbial expression for the whole country granted by the Supreme Proprietor to the great patriarch and his descendants.

UPPER PLAIN OF THE JORDAN—LAKE MEROM.

It is time to proceed down the stream, which soon practically terminates all disputes about its rise by uniting its waters into one. This is done when it reaches the Waters of Merom, or Samechonitis, or Lake Huleh, formerly Julias, in the Upper Plains of the river. This vicinity is mentioned in Joshua ix. 5 as the scene of one of that captain’s victories,—one of the most memorable both in itself and its results, in the whole war of the conquests. The sheet of water is described as of various sizes, according to the season of the year at which it is visited. Josephus describes it as seven miles long and four miles broad; others make it six miles broad, though in summer it becomes a mere marsh or tarn, portions of which are sown with rice. The reeds and flags which grow there, like Oriental jungle, furnish cover for wild hogs, buffaloes, and other animals which frequent the neighbourhood, while the uplands abound in gazelles. On the west and south-west side of the lake there is a tract of arable land where, in our View, the ploughman is seen at work. Streams rising from fountains, one called El-Mellahah, another Belat, more or less irrigate the neighbourhood. Tribes of Arabs in tents and reed-huts are commonly encamped in this plain, where an unusual mark of industry, a canal for irrigation, may be seen. The whole length of the plain or basin may be about fifteen miles.

The high lands to the west of Lake Huleh are thickly peopled, and well tilled. Indeed one name for the lake is Bahr Hit, or “The Sea of Wheat.” Many villages, some in ruins, are scattered over the region, one of which bears the name of Kedes, which Dr. Robinson, so happy in identifying places and names, has no doubt is the ancient Kadesh of Naphtali, a city of refuge and of the Levites, and the birth-place of Barak.* From some of the hill tops round this lake magnificent views of northern Palestine are enjoyed, and the traveller who does not allow himself to be precipitated through the Holy Land, but would rather explore its beauties till they are photographed upon his mind, should

* In the same region, remembrancers, if not remains, of the groves here consecrated to Astarte are pointed out.

thee from the lava of the

I will remember

Jordan - Psalm XLV. 6.



UPPER PLAIN OF
THE JORDAN.



turn aside from the beaten path, and linger among these uplands till the scene become familiar to him, henceforth to

“ Rise where'er he turns his eye
The morning star of memory.”

JACOB'S BRIDGE.

THE *Jisr Benat Jacob*, or “ Bridge of Jacob's Daughters,” as the Arabic name implies, is understood by most travellers to have taken its name from some corrupt tradition as to the patriarch crossing the Jordan at this point, on his return from Mesopotamia. That, however, is inconsistent with what the Scriptures tell of the incidents which happened by the brook Jabbok. Others, accordingly, surmise that the designation may be derived from some Arab tribe which bore the name of Beni Yakob in former times. Again, it is the opinion of some that there was probably a ford at this place from very ancient times, as it lies in the direct line of the caravan route from Damascus to Palestine, and that a bridge probably existed here at least from the time of the Romans. Others, however, conjecture that it is not later than the time of the Crusaders. Some centuries ago the ford was called Beit Yakob, “ The House of Jacob,” perhaps from the khan which still remains near the eastern end of the bridge; and as travellers to Palestine from the east are known to have crossed the Jordan below the Lake of Tiberias, it is hence supposed that the present bridge and route date from about the middle of the fifteenth century. It has four arches, according to some; three, according to others; and is sixty paces long, by about sixteen feet in width.

We cannot connect this ford or bridge directly or certainly with any Scriptural incident, though the Saviour must have passed it on his way to Cæsarea Philippi. But during the Crusades the passage of the Jordan was deemed of great importance, and was alternately held by the Saracens and the Crusaders, as victory inclined to the one or the other. In 1178, Baldwin IV. founded a castle on the west side of the river. It was assaulted by Saladin in person, but at first without success. After a successful battle near Paneas, he took the place and razed it to the ground. The ruins of it are still seen on the west bank of the Jordan. Near the bridge, the river, which is about forty yards wide, is full from bank to bank, flowing nearly due south, and along a plain nearly level. The vicinity, however, has little that is attractive; and scarcely a less monotonous portion of the river could be named than that in the centre of which stands the Bridge of Jacob's Daughters.

In the foreground of our View a representation is given of a perfectly Scriptural scene. Two men, each with a kind of threshing machine, are employed in separating grain from the straw upon a threshing floor. Oxen are yoked to the instrument. The driver is seated on it. It is a kind of sledge, armed with iron teeth, or sharp cutting stones, on the lower side. The united weight of the instrument and of the driver presses it down upon the grain, and by driving the cattle hither and thither over the floor, the ripe wheat is separated from the

straw by a process identical in principle with that of harrowing. It is clumsy and primitive, though it is an improvement upon yet earlier methods. To this mode of threshing the prophet refers, when he says to the "worm Jacob," "I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth" (Isa. xli. 15).

SEA OF GALILEE FROM SUPPOSED RUINS OF CAPERNAUM.

FROM the Waters of Merom the Jordan bounds away, as if eager to reach what must ever be regarded as its most suggestive, if not its most lovely portion, the Sea of Galilee. It flows through an extensive and fertile plain, in a wide but shallow stream, and pours itself into the sea just mentioned near its north-east extremity, where two isolated palms seem to greet its arrival. On its margin the tents of various Arab tribes are frequently seen spread over the plain of Batihah, and their marauding parties are sometimes troublesome. The region is generally fertile, because it is well watered,—and many specimens of the Oriental Flora may be gathered in the plain. The "nabk," or thorn-tree, the oleander, and other plants, bloom in unspeakable beauty, and their bright colours contrast strongly with the general sadness of the scene. The embouchure of the river into the lake lies in a very "thicket of oleanders."

But it is the lake itself that must ever rivet all hearts here. Will the reader look for a little at the View of the Sea of Galilee now in his hands? Will he trace its headlands and its bays, its towns and its ruins, its sunny calmness, its impressively solemn, silent look? He is standing *near* where Capernaum once stood; and though research has only turned the place into an arena for earnest debate, the traveller may feel assured and satisfied that he cannot, *at the most*, be more than a few arrow flights from the place. He is, accordingly, in the very centre of the Saviour's operations here; and it is, perhaps, less difficult for faith to realize his nearness at this spot than anywhere in Palestine besides. That Gentle Presence has made this lake and its shores peculiarly his own; he has linked his name for all time with its towns, its hill-sides, its corn-fields, and its waters; and his servant who taught us to say,—

"How pleasant to me, thy deep blue wave
O Sea of Galilee!
For the glorious One who came to save
Hath often stood by thee,"

only expressed in a plaintive form the sentiments of thousands of thousands.

But from the spot where we stand, let us run the eye as far as we can round the lake, in its general features, where often not a single human being is seen. The sea-margin is marked nearly all round its oval form by a white line, or beach of sand and broken shells; and the lake is about thirteen miles in length, by perhaps six in width, at its broadest parts; that is, it is about as long as Windermere, but very considerably broader, though the clearness of the atmosphere makes this sea and its shores seem smaller and nearer than the reality. The hills, on nearly every side, descend to the margin of the sea. On the east

thee from the land of the

I will remember

Jordan - Psalm XLII



JACOB'S BRIDGE
OVER THE JORDAN



shore, which is rarely visited, they are nearly of a continuous height, and not by any means lofty; but on the west they are more varied and picturesque. Hemmed in thus by hills, if not mountains, and depressed by at least three hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, the Sea of Galilee and its shores possess a climate peculiarly their own; they are signalized by gifts of nature, as they once were by the presence of "God with us." The hot springs of Tiberias, and other peculiarities of the region, indicate volcanic action; so that, in the sky above, in the earth beneath, and in the waters which are so copious, this district is peculiar. The palm is found in some abundance near Tiberias. Flowers bloom and fruits ripen near the lake much earlier than in other places of the country. In a word, if the truth of God had free course here, as the Saviour sought to give it, man might still be man; there would still be sin and sorrow, but a nearer approximation would be made to a paradise restored than perhaps any the world has witnessed. "The land of Gennesaret," about five miles wide, and seven long, would indeed become a Goshen.

It is, however, the Saviour himself who invests this region with all its attractions. It is scarcely mentioned at all in the Old Testament. Herod gave it a temporary importance by building Tiberias, named after his friend Tiberius, near the southern extremity; and his brother Philip attempted a similar thing by building Julias, at the northern end, in honour of Julia the daughter of Augustus. When Judea became subject to Rome, Galilee was the scene of some sieges and fighting. Moreover the Jews have given it a degree of interest by making Tiberias one of their holy places, and the seat of one of their chief schools. But all these are eclipsed, or rather outshone by Him who was "the brightness of his Father's glory." That lake may be troubled at times by sudden and violent tempests; but he can speak peace, and there is a great calm; or he can turn the troubled waters into a marble pavement. There may be deadly disease on its borders, but he can heal the sick; he can give sight to the blind; he can bid the dead arise. There may be loneliness inexpressible now around the lake; one traveller may tell us of the single boat that plies on it, and others may assure us that it has none, while a human voice or footstep is nowhere heard. But in the Saviour's time little fleets could be seen there, or put out at any moment from many a little harbour. There may be little now but ruins on its margin, or the pelican on its waters. But then, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and other "cities," stood upon its shores; while the activity of its trade in fishing, as in other respects, made it at all times astir with symptoms of life, it was, in truth, the sea of life, as surely as the lower lake was that of death.

Now it was in the midst of all this activity and stir that Christ took up his abode to "be about his Father's business." That became the centre of his operations. There he did many of his wonderful works; there he uttered some of his terrible woes. Again and again he crossed that lake, now to feed thousands on the eastern side, in a desert place, and anon to cure the poor demoniac who dwelt among the tombs at Gadara (or Gerasa, or Gergesa,) and refused all

clothing. From Bethsaida, "The House of Fisheries," he chose some of his disciples. At that great focal point of population, the Saviour plied his busy work of winning sinners to his God, and our God. There multitudes flocked around him. There blows were struck which are reverberating through the world still. There words were spoken which, assuredly, have not returned void to Him who spake them. From these waters he preached. On them he wrought miracles. There he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection (John xxi). Where thorny jungles now grow, the Saviour of the lost once pointed the wandering to glory and to God. There he beckoned to them in love, and in love said, "Come," for he was going. Even the Bedawin, who roam the eastern shores, did not scare the Saviour thence. He would have all men to be saved, and proved his purpose by everywhere seeking the lost.

As the eye thus wanders over this most interesting of all regions, where

"Graceful around thee the mountains meet,
Thou calm reposing Sea,"

it easily descries the place where there was much grass, above the north-east portion of the lake; and behind it the mountain to which, no doubt, after the miracle, the Redeemer retired. And there is Magdala, as seen in our View, with its overhanging cliffs, and solitary thorn-tree. There are brooks trickling down to the lake, across which Jesus must have stepped again, and again, and again. But everywhere, above, below, around, incident crowds upon incident to make the region sacred, as far as aught not spiritual can be so.

"It is not that the fig-tree grows,
And palms, in thy soft air,
But that Sharon's fair and bleeding Rose
Once spread His fragrance there."

This, we repeat, is the charm of the place; and were superstition ever to rob the believer of his Bible, this is the scene he would choose to dwell in; for here the land would combine with the sea, the mountain with the valley, the flower of the field with the bird of the air, to tell that bereaved one of the Saviour.

But in spite of all these attractions, what a blight, a withering mildew has passed over the scene! Like the cities of the lower plain, the cities here have disappeared. Capernaum is a mere guess, once exalted as it was. At least four spots have been selected by their different partisans as representing that town,—and so of other places. He whose words could not pass away, spoke, and it is done; and while there are a thousand things here to tell of the "goodness" of the Lord, there is not a little to proclaim his "severity" also. Roman ambition, Arab hordes, Turkish misrule, darkening superstitions, fierce fanaticism, all have had a share in the work of desolation; and the very place which was the Redeemer's home for his three most eventful years is now utterly unknown. And is not this *one* reason of the utter demolition—He would fix our thoughts more singly upon himself? He would detach us from all associations with holy places? He would save us from the idolatry of worshipping dust and ashes?

thee from the land of the

I will remember.

Jordan Psalms 124



SEA OF GALILEE FROM
SUPPOSED RUINS OF
CAPERNAUM.

Enough that Jesus was here—spoke there—poured blessings round him everywhere—gazed upon these skies—wrought wonders on these hill-sides—sailed, walked upon these waters. Such truths calm the troubled soul which loves him, even as his word hushed the waves, and there was a great calm.

And there is a great calm still over all this wondrous sea,—it is so silent and lonely, or, in certain states of the sky, so sullen or depressed. When the night wind is soft, and the dew falls gently, the bulbul may sometimes be heard in the thicket, and some souls, in harmony with the scene, have then kept silent watch. But they tell us, that when the sweet singer pauses, the silence is awful; it is that of the wilderness,—it is like death. At other times, and at some spots on the banks of the Jordan, there is not a little to gladden. Creeping mosses and climbing weeds, with a multitude of little flowers among them, spread a kind of joy. The cliff-swallow is there wheeling in rapid circles, or threading his way among the dark vistas on the margin of the stream, where the foliage meets and forms a needed screen. Such symptoms of life are reviving, but they are rare; and the mind must either sink into the sad monotony of the scene, or cleave to Him who is the Life, in whom there is joy, apart from whom there is only woe for man.

Reference is often made to the mode in which the Scriptures become like living realities to a traveller in the Holy Land. He sees at this hour the customs which were common in the days of the Saviour, nay, in those of Abraham, and the Bible thus seems a book written but a few years ago, or rather, it is seen to be the book of all ages and of all men. The funeral wail, and the mourners in the East, are the same as they were two thousand years ago. Shepherds and their sheep, bottles and their contents, houses and their divisions, books, their materials and form, ploughing, sowing, reaping, threshing, winnowing, all are identical with the corresponding practices of Abraham's day, of David's, and of Paul's. We give but a single example of such local suggestiveness. As Canon Stanley approached the Plain of Gennesareth, he asked himself, "Is there aught here to suggest the parable of the sower, which was spoken on this lake?" A slight recess in the hill-side, close to the plain, was soon disclosed; and first, an undulating corn-field was seen, such as might have been before the Saviour when he uttered the parable. Secondly, there was a trodden and unfenced pathway running through the field, suggesting one of the four classes of hearers, hard as the path was with the tread of man, and horse, and mule. Thirdly, there was the rocky ground of the hill-side, protruding through the soil, suggesting another class. Fourthly, there were thickets of the nabk, or thorn-tree, from which bush, tradition says, the crown of thorns was made, suggesting a third class. And fifthly, there was the good ground waving with grain, suggestive of the fourth—"one vast mass of corn," Canon Stanley says—and we need not tarry to show that all this rivets at least the historical truth and accuracy of Scripture upon many a mind. Infidelity, clinging to a foregone conclusion, can, no doubt, resist it all; but some have gone thither as sceptics, and left the lovely Lake of Tiberias, or the sullen Sea of Lot, believers in the letter of the Bible at least.

As one sails past Cape Colonna, the ancient Sunium, where Plato once taught, one would gladly learn wisdom from that profoundest of the sages; but a greater than Plato has been here, and why not learn a profounder wisdom from Him? Or, as one roams over the Troad, he cannot but think of the blind old man whose marvellous songs have been the joy of myriads from his day to ours. Yet what is all the wisdom, the graphic power, the inimitable poetry of Homer, in their moral bearings, to that one sentence of the Redeemer, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?" What soul, alive to the vast concerns of an eternal world, ever passed quietly away prepared for the judgment, merely with Homer, or Plato for its guide? But ten thousand times ten thousand have thus passed away, reposing calmly on the sure word of Jesus; and happy are they whom grace is teaching to do likewise.

FORDS OF THE JORDAN.

THE meaning of the word Jordan is alleged to be "the descender," or "the rapid;" and we are now to trace it in its descent from the Sea of Galilee till it is lost, literally and absolutely lost, in the Dead Sea, a distance of perhaps sixty miles in a straight line, but reckoned not less than two hundred by water, owing to the windings of the stream. The Ghor—such is the name of the region through which the river flows—is tame in its character where the water breaks away from the lake. The mountains are rough and barren there. The average breadth of the river for some distance is about seventy-five feet: the banks, luxuriantly clothed with grass and flowers, are about thirty feet high. The anemone, marigold, an occasional water-lily, and here and there a straggling asphodel, beautify the margin. The water here is clear, and about ten feet deep. Islands, some of them green and lovely, abound; and at a short distance below the lake is Jisr Semakh, "The Bridge of Semakh." The ruins are described as extremely picturesque; and the dilapidated abutments surrounded by the stream, here rushing like a mountain torrent, enhance the effect of the whole, crowned as they are with the nests of storks. The river is now about ninety feet wide; and flowers familiarly known in Europe—pheasant's eye, the briony, and others—are here found in the Ghor.

Somewhat farther down the river are the ruins of another bridge, where the stream is one foaming rapid for more than three hundred yards. Indeed at that part of the Jordan five or six rapids exist, and near them are some mills and sluices—unwonted symptoms of industry here. Within a short space no fewer than eleven rapids are counted. The stream at one place gradually widens till it becomes a hundred and sixty feet wide and two and a half deep, and one who navigated the stream at that point says: "We saw a partridge, an owl, a large hawk, some herons, and many storks, and caught a trout." The river is now skirted by the tamarisk and willows, with tangled vines as underwood. The villages of Delhemiyeh, as well as that of Bukah, are ruins made by the Bedawin; and all that can betoken oppression or unsafety is rife in the land. Yet the soil

near the river is so rich that it could easily be made to support a vast population. In a single day, nine rapids may be passed in this region, where the average breadth of the river is about a hundred and thirty feet, and its depth from two feet and a half to six. A traveller gives the following account of his encampment in this vicinity: "Above was the whirlpool; abreast and winding below, glancing in the moonlight, was the silvery sheen of the river; and high up on each side were the ruined villages, whence the peaceful fellahin (or peasantry) had been driven by the predatory robber. The whooping of the owl above, the song of the bulbul below, were drowned in the onward rush and deafening roar of the tumultuous waters."

Farther down the Jordan is the Jisr Mejamia, or "Bridge of the Meeting Place." It has one large and three smaller Saracenic arches below, and six smaller ones above them. The neighbourhood shows symptoms of some volcanic convulsions. The bed of the river is rocky like a mountain torrent; and here and elsewhere there are islands in the Jordan. At some distance above this bridge, the Yermak joins the river from the east, and that tributary at its embouchure is nearly as broad and as deep as the Jordan itself. The bridge marks the line of road from Naplous by Beisan to Damascus; and the mountains of Gilboa on the west tell the traveller that this is the scene of Saul's disaster and death. Defeated in battle, he committed self-murder, and the Philistines fastened his head, with those of his three sons, to the walls of Bethshan. From that ignominious exposure they were delivered by the valiant men of Jabesh Gilead, on the opposite side of the river, who took the royal though dishonoured remains, and "buried them under a tree in Jabesh" (1 Sam. xxxi. 7-13).

But we should not be attracted here only by the objects of external nature, without considering the condition of those who now occupy these banks. Socially, politically, and morally, the present condition of these people is such as must mar the joy of any visitor who looks on man as destined for an eternity either of joy or of woe. The history of the past, and the ruins which still give a character to all this land, tell us how populous it was once; and in as far as the living and the true God was honoured, feared, and served, there were both prosperity and peace. But now, socially, every man's hand is against his brother, and the country is desolate and dreary. Tribe lives by plunder upon tribe, and blood touches blood because of their raids, robberies, and wild revenge. Men will not sow when they know not who is to reap. Again, politically the people on the margin of the Jordan are down-trodden and oppressed. If not plundered by the Bedawin, they are robbed and peeled by their own government; and the worn-out fellahin, with the drudging fellahaahs, their wives, rank not seldom among the saddest specimens of mankind,—lank, filthy, hunger-bitten, and thievish as South Sea islanders in the days of Cook. And religiously these tribes are low beyond what can be told. A few superstitious rites and an occasional ablution constitute the whole of their religion. They will starve, indeed, rather than taste pork, and they are sober because they cannot get wine. But their code of morals is low beyond description. The women, as at Jericho, are pro-

figate and abandoned; while their abodes are kraals and wigwams rather than homes.

We need not, perhaps, now proceed with such minute details regarding the Jordan, as a description of the first fifteen or twenty miles after it leaves the Sea of Galilee is generally applicable to the whole. The cane and an occasional palm-tree may be seen on its margin. In its course, it is now serpentine beyond most streams, and anon more straight and continuous,—now it rushes along with an impetuosity said to amount to twelve miles in an hour, anon it is dull, sluggish, and muddy. At one place there are green and goodly islands, at another dark basaltic rocks turn the channel into a whirlpool. At one place the width is mentioned as being a hundred and thirty feet; at another a hundred and fifty are mentioned, with four feet in depth, and a current of five miles in an hour; at another two hundred and ten feet are mentioned. At a fourth place the width is given at two hundred and forty feet, with a depth of two feet; but the average of width in a day's sailing there was a hundred and sixty-eight feet.

The descent of the river, as we have seen, is at some places perilously rapid. Its motion ranges from two knots to twelve in the hour, though in shooting some of the rapids the descent is so impetuous that it can scarcely be measured. But when the traveller there can leisurely contemplate and calmly enjoy the scene, it is often one of real Oriental beauty. The nightingale, amid the overhanging trees, can fancy day to be night; and some have told how her amorous descant proceeded uninterrupted even by the proximity of man. And there is time at some places to enjoy all this; for so serpentine is the river, that in the short space of half an hour it curves and twists to every quarter of the compass. On the margin, however, the traveller often meets enough to disarm the whole. The prowling Arab, watching like a tiger or a fox for his prey, and despising honest industry, as if it would be a disgrace to cultivate the soil like a fellah, while a terrible delusion called religion holds him in its grasp, tells again how surely man's presence can profane or pollute whatever he touches. The music manifold of those tangled thickets is all hushed by the sad spectacle of man thus preying upon man; while sheikhs measure their greatness by the number of dependants whom they can count ready at the flash of a sword or a spear to murder their neighbours, and give their homes to the flames.

It is time, however, that we were describing the Fords of the Jordan, locally designated El-Meshra, "The Bathing Place." In approaching the Plains of Jericho from the north, the traveller may well begin to ponder the marvels which these plains have witnessed. It was here that the children of Israel first crossed the Jordan, and entered the Promised Land. At some spot along these reaches, the river, and that in spring, stood still at the bidding of Him whose word had commanded it to flow. Here the priests with the ark, the symbol of Jehovah's presence, saw the people pass over on dry land; and here another proof was given to the tribes hovering on the rear of the Hebrews, and ready to crush them if they could, that the mighty God was among them of a truth. In this region Jericho once stood,—the Jericho which passed so strangely under the

power of Israel,—where Jesus wrought his wonders, and saved at least one soul,—a city whose dreary, desolate remains may still be traced, at least by an antiquarian's eye, in various parts of the plain. But all around desolation now reigns. A false religion, long years of oppression, and guilt added to crime, have turned the region into barrenness. What was once more than a garden is now a heath, barren and untilled,—the grave of a former greatness.

But tradition—more probably true in this case than in most others—points to this neighbourhood as that in which Jesus was baptized by John. To Bethabara, “The House of the Passage,” perhaps in reference to the passage of the Israelites, Jesus retired when the people sought to lay hold of him (John x. 40, compared with i. 28), and there is reason to conclude that there he was previously baptized. But be that as it may, men have for ages bathed in this neighbourhood as a religious rite, and the scene witnessed at these annual bathings is now to be described.

On the morning of April 18, 1848, an American party witnessed the bathing. They were roused from their tents on the west bank of the Jordan at three A. M. by the information that the pilgrims on the way from Jericho were approaching, and beheld thousands of torches, with a dark mass, moving below in the direction of the Fords or bathing-place. Men, women, and children were there, mounted on camels, horses, mules, and donkeys, and all rushing towards the stream with a confusion and a precipitancy resembling the flight of a routed army rather than a religious procession. By five o'clock, or just at day dawn, the numbers that had reached the river, or were approaching it in hot haste, were computed to amount to eight thousand. Copts, Russians, Poles, Armenians, Greeks, Syrians, in short, people from all the quarters of the compass, and of all creeds save that of the Bible, were there. They talked, they screamed, they shouted. They were of every age and every hue. They spoke almost every known language. Women and children were swung in panniers across beasts of burden; and all with a resistless pressure sought the margin of the Jordan, the terminus to many of a weary pilgrimage, there to disrobe and rush into the sacred stream. Each seemed to forget the presence of all. Some plunged themselves in the stream: others were dipped three times, and then carried away a bottle of the precious liquid. The dress of some was as grotesque as their deportment. It was white, marked with a black cross. The scene at its acme lasted about an hour; and then, furnished with some branch or twig from the banks, the crowd withdrew, and in about three hours, silence and solitude had again taken possession of the scene. The bathers for the most part were quiet and reverential while in the stream, though some displayed a levity which too clearly betrayed the inward feeling.

But why such pilgrimages and such bathings? They are man's substitute for God's truth. They are Satanic modes of giving the soul a stone instead of bread, or a serpent when it asks a fish. It is the washing of the body substituted for the cleansing of the soul,—the counterfeit put in place of the genuine,—the human passed off for the divine. In a word, the scenes at the Fords rank in spirit with the great annual imposture of the Greek Fire, or the melting of the

blood of Januarius, or any of the delusions by which men are deceived to their ruin.

While in this district, the traveller should not fail to visit some of the Scriptural localities, which are at length definitely ascertained. At a short distance south from Jericho, he will find the wady Kelt, now believed to be the brook Cherith, and will thus be helped to study the character of one of the most wonderful characters even of Scripture,—the prophet Elijah. Great, indomitable, mighty like Abraham in faith, a fearless man of the people, a hater of superstition, a man of prayer, but withal thoroughly a prophet of the Old Testament, not of the New—such was the character of Elijah, a character which was in part formed and fostered near the Kelt. And at no great distance, on the opposite side, is Bethpeor, among the mountains of Abarim, where the Israelites, wedded to idolatry, and incapable of spiritual worship, were enticed from their own God (Num. xxv. 1-9), and where woe came upon many as the result. And here also is Gilgal, the place of remembrance, at which stones were erected to commemorate the passing of the river by the children of Israel. Then along the east margin run the Plains of Moab, so conspicuous in Hebrew history in consequence of the frequent wars between the Jews and the Moabites. Indeed, if we love to linger by the scenes which Virgil or Horace sang, and if we there read their poetry with a double zest, the same law may give a deeper meaning to many portions of the Bible in the neighbourhood of Jericho.

But in former times the Fords, if these be the same, have witnessed other sights. Here Gideon, the deliverer of his countrymen from oppression, as well as other Hebrew heroes, signalized themselves. But the quiet beauty of the scene, as represented in our View, has attractions irrespective of all historical or sacred associations. The tamarisk, the oleander, and other Oriental productions, abound there. The quiet flow of the stream, here broad and rather deep, gives at once stillness and life. The two worlds, the real and the reflected, deepen the impressions of the place; and though it be true here as elsewhere that

“This world is all a fleeting show,
For man's illusion given.”

it is not less true that on the banks of the Jordan one becomes familiar with thoughts which cannot be evoked by any other stream that waters the earth.

Wonder has often been expressed that so little is said of the music of the East by those who have visited the Orient. The daughters of music, it was predicted, would cease, and it seems all but literally true of Palestine. Besides a few meagre chants, music there is none. The following is given as a song of the Nile boatmen, and the wails of Palestine are somewhat similar:—“O my eyes!” the boatmen sing, “O my love! O the soul! O the moon! O my father! O my mother! O my sister! O the river! O the pilgrimage to Mecca! O the procession of the Sultan! O the prophet! O the effendi! O Abbas Pasha! O Mohammed We are going up the Nile.” Such is the strain, without sentiment, nay, without ideas, and utterly without music. A kind of viol with

thee from the land of the

I will remember

Jordan - Palm Kings



ENTRANCE OF THE
JORDAN INTO THE
DEAD SEA.



one string, called a rehabeḥ, is often used on the banks of the Jordan as elsewhere. Love songs are sometimes sung by a professed bard, but both the instrument and the accompaniment are rude beyond easy endurance. One describes it as "a low, long-drawn, mournful wail, like the cry of the jackal set to music." The subject may be love, but the treatment turns it into a dirge, heart-rending and lugubrious. No mirthfulness, no bright hope, no thrilling fear, but all a dictate of anguish, as if the inspiration were woe. Such were the sentiments suggested, at least to Westerns, by the rustic music of modern Palestine. It produced other feelings among the people of the land; and tried by that standard, the performance may answer its purpose. But it can scarcely be called music, except as any intonations, however unmusical or harsh, may assume that name when represented by notes. "All the merry-hearted do sigh," "gladness is taken away." Any music that exists is chiefly imported, perhaps from Persia; and the rehabeḥ, with its single string, appears to be the sole native representative of the tabret and harp, the lute, the viol, the organ, the sackbut, the psaltery, and timbrel, of former days.

ENTRANCE OF THE JORDAN INTO THE DEAD SEA.

ONE who explored the Jordan with care, from its source to the Dead Sea, has said: "Everything said in the Bible about this Sea and the Jordan, we believe to be fully verified by our observations."* Now, we have glanced at the truth regarding the stream, and all that remains is to exemplify it concerning the Sea.

In the river between the Lake of Galilee and the Dead Sea, the voyager on the Jordan plunges down no fewer than twenty-seven threatening rapids, besides a great many smaller ones. As the former sea is above three hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and the latter more than thirteen hundred, the difference between the two is the measure of the descent; but as the distance, though in reality only sixty miles, is about two hundred by water, in consequence of the windings of the river, there are some portions of the Jordan sufficiently sluggish. Approaching the sea, the river is from a hundred and twenty to a hundred and fifty feet wide, and twelve feet deep. Cane-brakes, tamarisk-trees, and various others, line the shore. The river gradually widens to two hundred and forty feet and upwards. Several islands are near its embouchure; and where the stream actually joins the sea it is a hundred and eighty yards, or five hundred and forty feet wide, and three feet deep.

We are now, then, on the nauseous waters of the Sea of Lot, for so the Arabs call this sheet of water. Portions of it at least were once "even as the garden of the Lord;" but now the scene is one of unmixed desolation. The air is tainted with noxious exhalations; and even the foliage of the cane, generally a light green, is tawny near this sea. Except the cane-brakes, which appear near some of the streams, there are spots where no vestige of vegetation can be

* Lieut. Lynch, American Exploring Expedition.

traced. Barren mountains; precipices which overhang the sea sometimes to the height of twelve hundred or fifteen hundred feet; fragments of rocks precipitated to the beach, and blackened by the deposits of the place; trees washed down by the Jordan, but now lying blasted and dead along the margin of this region of death; the sullen, lead-coloured waters, in which no microscope can detect a trace of life; the bare, bluff mountains on the east side; the hills of Moab, and other scenes far more than classical; above all, the associations of the sea with Sodom and Gomorrah;—all render this basin so sad and so sombre in appearance, as to depress even the most jubilant mind. At the sight of “such calcined barrenness,” we can well justify the application so often made of the lines—

“But here, above, around, below,
 In mountain or in glen,
 Nor tree, nor plant, nor shrub, nor flower,
 Nor aught of vegetative power
 The wearied eye may ken:
 But all its rocks at random thrown—
 Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone.”

—What a contrast between the present aspect of the Sea of Lot and the appearance of the neighbourhood when he chose it as his pasture-ground and heritage, though it proved one of woe!

And yet, there are spots of unusual beauty at no great distance—fragments spared, as if to show how exquisite once was the whole. The nabk, or thorn-tree, called by the Arabs dhom, the osher or apple of Sodom, the tamarisk, the oleander, as well as some other trees, are found at some spots; and the osher seems to deserve a description, as we are now amid the scenes which are deemed its home. The blossom is of a delicate purple, small, bell-shaped, and grows in large clusters. The leaf is oblong, thick, smooth, and of a dark green hue. The branches are tortuous, and the fruit, which is about the size of a small lemon, with the colour of an apple, is dry, and easily broken, like a puff-ball. Hence its peculiar character, as all ashes within.

Moreover, on the margin of the sea—for instance, at the fountain of Engedi, or “The Goats,” and other places—some travellers describe scenes of singular beauty. On the western bank of the lake, the clear stream of this fountain breaks out on a high platform about four hundred feet above the Sea. It descends through the cliffs to the shore; and wherever it flows, there is verdure. The name is no doubt derived from the number of gazelles, or Syrian chamois, which frequent the cliffs. The scene altogether is justly regarded as one of the sights of Palestine; and we need not wonder although, when that land was a country, and had a people, a city stood there—“The City of Palms,” or Hazazon-Tamar—deriving its name from the tree which once abounded by the fountain. The neighbourhood contains many caves, which at different times have been the homes of the oppressed, or the lurking-places of the lawless. It was in one of them that David with his companions, when fleeing from Saul, took

refuge. It was there also that the fugitive cut off a fragment of the sullen king's robe; which incident afterwards smoothed for a time the dark brow of Saul. At Engedi, moreover, dwelt some of the superstitious in early ages—the men who dreamt that hiding in a den was fleeing from the world. And once more, in sight of the heights above Engedi is Messada, the fortress in which the last remnant of the Jews, rather than submit to Titus, offered themselves a self-immolated holocaust to freedom and their faith.—It is a wonderful land, and once the abode of a wonderful race.

A glimpse of some of its beauties may not be out of place. While rambling in a ravine near some caverns such as we have mentioned, Lieutenant Lynch says that he was preparing to enter; “but the sound of the running stream, and the cool shadow of the gorge, were too inviting; and advancing through tamarisk, oleander, and cane, we came upon the very Egeria of fountains. Far in among the cane, embowered, embedded, hidden deep in the shadow of the purple rocks, and the soft, green gloom of luxuriant vegetation, lapsing with a gentle murmur from basin to basin over the rocks, under the rocks, by the rocks, and clasping the rocks with its crystal arms, was this little fountain-wonder. The thorny nabk and the pliant osher were on the bank above; yet lower, the oleander and the tamarisk; while upon its brink the lofty cane, bent by the weight of its fringe-like tassels, formed bowers over the stream fit for the haunts of Naiads.”

Yet, with these exceptions all in view, let the reader glance at our Engraving of the Dead Sea, and mark how well it merits the name it wears. We do not tarry to describe the masses of bitumen sometimes thrown up from the bottom, remains of the slime pits of old; or the absence of an outlet for the waters of the Jordan; nor do we dwell on the two plains now ascertained to form the bottom of the sea, the one thirteen hundred feet deep, where the bed of the river once lay, the other about thirteen, where, as some argue, the cities of the plain formerly stood; neither do we describe the salt pillar of Usdun—that is, Sodom: we only say, that of all dreary scenes, this is one of the most awful and depressing. Taken in connection with its history, and viewed in the light of the Bible, it is more desolate than the great Zahara—the land as well as the sea seems dead. Fetid exhalations, leafless wastes, the earth seared, the waters salt, the sky brass: behold a picture of this sublime desolation—this most solemn of witnesses for God!

Yet let us not exaggerate. Solemn even to painfulness as these shores appear, there are other spots on earth more suggestive of ruin even than they. Let us pass, for example, to Thebes in Egypt, and not merely are a few cities there entombed—it is computed that from 8,000,000 to 10,000,000, or as many as a hundredth part of the present population of the world, were deposited as mummies in the catacombs of that single city. A traveller has taken his stand upon the Libyan Mountains, which overlook the plain of the hundred-gated Thebes, and reminded us there that the wealth, the power, and the religious sentiment, of many generations had perforated those mountains for miles, filling up every inch of the cavities with dwellings of the dead. Now, these stately ruins of

Egypt, carrying us back to the days of Abraham and Joseph, and still vast, or even august; the mysterious mounds and cities recently discovered in Central America; with the disinterments of Nineveh, of Babylon, of Persepolis, and "Shushan the palace;"—all link the present with the past, in a manner which he is dull indeed who does not understand. Everything proclaims that "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass." Common-places there acquire the freshness and the force of deep, original sayings; and while poetry exclaims—

"In many a heap the ground
Heaves as though Ruin, in a frantic mood,
Had done his utmost. Here and there appears,
As left to show his handy-work, not ours,
An idle column, a half-buried arch,
A wall of some great temple. It was once
And long the centre of the universe"—

Religion, pointing heavenward, bids us look for firmer foundations and more enduring homes on high, and he who can leave the shores of the Dead Sea without feeling some such impression made upon the mind, has need to inquire whether the God of the Bible be his God, and its salvation his.

The conclusion of the whole matter is this: If man's mind be open to conviction, or if he be not so credulous as to believe the lies of infidelity, the aspect of this Sea must fasten conviction on his mind. One who explored all its coasts, and fathomed its depths, and cleared up some of its mysteries, has said: "We entered upon this sea with conflicting opinions. One of the party was sceptical, and another, I think, a professed unbeliever in the Mosaic account. After twenty-two days' close investigation, if I am not mistaken, we are unanimous in the conviction of the truth of the Scriptural account of the cities of the plain." The facts observed tally so completely with the truths recorded, the whole condition of the wondrous region is so unique, the very structure or form of the rocks is at some places so peculiar, that the mind is forced to accept of some great catastrophe, perhaps more than one, to explain what it beholds. It now becomes plain that God made known his acts unto Moses; and, resting on that truth, the soul becomes better prepared alike for the trials of earth and for the beatitudes of that world where there shall be no more sea. When the sea shall give up her dead, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah will be of the number. Dear reader, you and I will be present at that solemn scene; and where shall we appear?—on the right or the left of the Judge?

